NOVACON 28

Read Me Inside!

NOVACON 28

Date: 13-15 November 1998.
Venue: The Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham.
Guest of Honour: Paul J McAuley.

Read Me Inside!

This publication gives you all the information we think you'll need whilst you are inside the Britannia; for information about Eating Out, cashpoints etc. please refer to your Read Me Outside!

The Programme by Pat McMurray

We've tried to leave the programme flexible enough so that you can attend lots of it and still eat, get a beer and hang out. Most programme items are 45 minutes long in one hour slots, thus giving you 15 whole minutes every hour of beer and toilet time! There are empty hour long slots at lunchtime and in the evening, and we hope you will shape your evening at least partially around the programme. For those of you who want music and action, discos and ceilidhs go on until late. For those of you who want conversation, the bars will be open!

A small prize will be given to the fan who spots the most film and TV references in this programme. If more than one fan wins, the small prize will be split into even smaller prizes! When you enter, include a list of the references.

(Please note that this programme may change slightly on the day. All events will be in the Gloucester Room on the 9th floor except where otherwise stated.)

FRIDAY

19:00 Opening Ceremony
Participants: Paul J McAuley, Martin Tudor & Committee
Meet our wonderful guest, our delightful committee and our reprehensible chairman.

19:10 Modern Space Opera
Participants: Paul J McAuley, Peter F Hamilton, John Meaney, Pat McMurray(Moderator)

It's back! It's bigger and better! It's British! Following two fallow decades for space opera, The Empire Strikes Back

20:00 Birmingham Science Fiction Group Meeting featuring Brian W Aldiss

Birmingham Science Fiction Group event to launch the second volume of Brian Aldiss's autobiography. Open to non-members of the BSFG (i.e. all members of Novacon!).

21:00 Dinner

Participants: Everybody

The Restaurant on the first floor - go eat, have a beer, hang out.

21:00 Brian W Aldiss Signing Session and Andromeda Party

Following his talk in the Gloucester, on the 9th floor, Brian Aldiss will move down to the Mezzanine where he will be signing copies of the second volume of his autobiography, THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE: MY LIFE AS AN ENGLISHMAN (Little, Brown), in Harvey's.

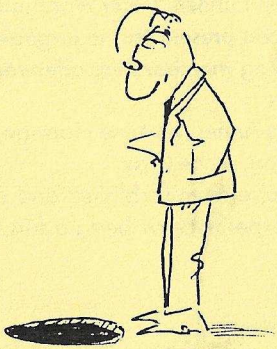
22:00 To Hell With Burgundy

Described as "Fleetwood Mac meets the Pogues", To Hell With Burgundy are a folk rock band who played at Intuition the 1998 Eastercon in Manchester.

00:00 Ceilidh

Participants: The 2Kon committee and anyone else who wants to join in.

The 2000 Eastercon, 2Kon, provide the traditional celtic ceilidh.



ASTROPHYSICIST AT WORK.

SATURDAY

11:00 The Christmas Lectures: What Really Happened
Participant: Ian Stewart
Professor Ian Stewart, next year's Guest of Honour, talks about the experience of giving the Royal Institution Christmas Lectures.

12:00 Book Auction
Participants: Rog Peyton, 1/2r Cruttenden
Buy some books, sell some books.

13:00 Lunch
Participants: Everybody
The Restaurant on the first floor - have a sandwich, go shopping.

14:00 Guest of Honour Interview
Participants: Paul J McAuley, Pat Cadigan
Novacon 28's Guest of Honour is interviewed by Pat Cadigan

15:00 Blankety Blank
Participants: Bridget Bradshaw, Mike Siddall.
Another fun Blankety Blank, filled with wit, humour and Blankety Blank, presented by Bug. Sadly her Beautiful Assistant couldn't make it so we've got Mike Siddall instead.

16:00 Whatever happened to Bat Durston?
Participants: Julian Headlong, Peter Weston
Peter and Julian reminiscing about futures past, the science fictional present and the future of future future histories.

17:00 Reconvened Quiz
Participants: Gwen Funnell, Peter Wareham.
The 1999 Eastercon present this regurgitated reconvened quiz. Yes, they'll be selling memberships afterwards.

18:00 The Professionals
Participants: Chris Amies, Lisanne Norman, Cherith Baldry, Jo Walton (Moderator), Anne Gay
You're a fan. You've been published and paid. What's now different in your experience of being a fan, and your understanding of being a pro?

19:00 Dinner
Participants: Everybody
The Restaurant on the first floor - it's called the F-Plan diet.

20:00 TAFF MUST DIE!
Participants: Julian Headlong, Maureen Kincaid Speller, Victor Gonzalez, moderated by Sue Mason

Some people feel that the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund (TAFF) has outlived its purpose. Some people feel it's still an important part of fannish culture. TAFF hater Julian Headlong, TAFF winner Maureen Kincaid Speller and TAFF loser Victor Gonzalez discuss the issue moderated by the relatively neutral Sue Mason.

21:00 My Claire Lady
Participants: Ian Sorensen, Julia Daly, Linda Krawecke, Debbi Kerr, Chris O'Shea, Noel Collyer and the artist formerly known as Pat McMurray
Just when you thought it was safe to come back to Novacon, Ian Sorensen has risen from his crypt and given life to yet another travesty of a rock musical, aided by a cast of thousands, most of whom should have known better.

22:00 Fan Fund Auction - Something Different
Participants: Maureen Kincaid Speller and the Spellerettes.
This will be held in the Warwick (at the back of the Gloucester) if TAFF is still alive following the earlier item, something wonderful is going to happen, to raise money for TAFF, GUFF and other fannish good causes.

23:00 Bad Influence
Live music from a committee member and his band, but don't let that influence you.

23.45 James Henry's Disco
We promise, no canary yellow trousered DJs this year. Unsuitable comments about yellow submarines were edited out here...

00:15 Bad Influence Part Two

01.00 James Henry's Disco Part Two

SUNDAY

11:00 To Boldly Go
Participants: KIM Campbell and others.
We're promised that this will be an interesting presentation about the proposed bid for another UK Worldcon. Reminded of the ancient Chinese curse, we wait with baited breath.

12:00 Art Auction
Participants: Rog Peyton, Chris Morgan, 1/2r Cruttenden
You just know you've got a suitable space for that painting at home. Go on, go on, you know you want to.

13:00 Lunch
Participants: Everyone

The Restaurant on the first floor - I'll have what she's having.

14:00 The Nature of Science

Participants: Paul J McAuley, Dave Clements (Moderator), Amanda Baker

Is the modern template of science that of Pandora's Box, rather than that of Prometheus?

15:00 SF Foundation Relaunch

Participants: Caroline Mullan, Paul Kincaid and others

Over the past year the Friends of Foundation have been working towards a relaunch as the SF Foundation. For a large part of the past decade, saving the library has been a driving force behind FoF, and now that it is secure they can turn to other matters. This will be a sampler of the new plans - education, the journal, the Clarke Award, etc.

16:00 Turkey Basting

Participants: Julian Headlong, Mike Siddall, Carol Morton

You know how this works. You donate money to charity, we stop reading; you donate money to charity, we keep reading; you throw pounds at us and we grab them and hide under the table.

17:00 Awards Ceremony

Paul J McAuley, Martin Tudor, Committee, Award Winners, Gophers, Quiz Winners

It's nearly over. Come and see fanzine writers and artists be embarrassed, gophers be honoured and our guest be appreciated. We've worked hard, we've had fun, we've drunk too much.

18:00 Dinner

Participants: Everyone who is left.

This sitting of the Convention Menu will be served from in the Warwick on the ninth floor - best stoke up before you start drinking!

20:00 The International Beer Tasting

Participants: Tony Berry and whoever's left.

"Our beer which art in barrels,/ Hallowed be thy drink,/ Thy will be drunk, I will be drunk,/ At home as we are in the local./ Give us this day our daily ale,/ And forgive us our daily spillage/ As we forgive them that spillage against us./ Lead us not into temptation of Nitrokegs,/ And deliver us from Lagers and Alcopops./ For mine is the bitter, the mild and the porter,/ Forever and ever/ Barmen."

Now it's over. Goodbye. See you next year. Sayonara. Hasta la vista, baby.

Finally, we also have two workshops arranged: a Writer's Workshop by Graham Joyce on the Saturday, and a Presentation Workshop by John D Rickett -- further details below.

Writers Workshop by Graham Joyce

The writers' workshop will be conducted at 3pm on Saturday afternoon. Rather than bringing along previously written manuscripts, the participants will be invited to produce new material in the workshop.
The workshop will comprise:

1) An input on Narrative Structure from Graham
2) Writing exercises designed to refresh approaches to writing
3) The production of a short, tightly edited piece of writing for exhibition at the convention.

The convention will make available a PC/word-processing facility so that participants can type up and print short, complete pieces of writing.

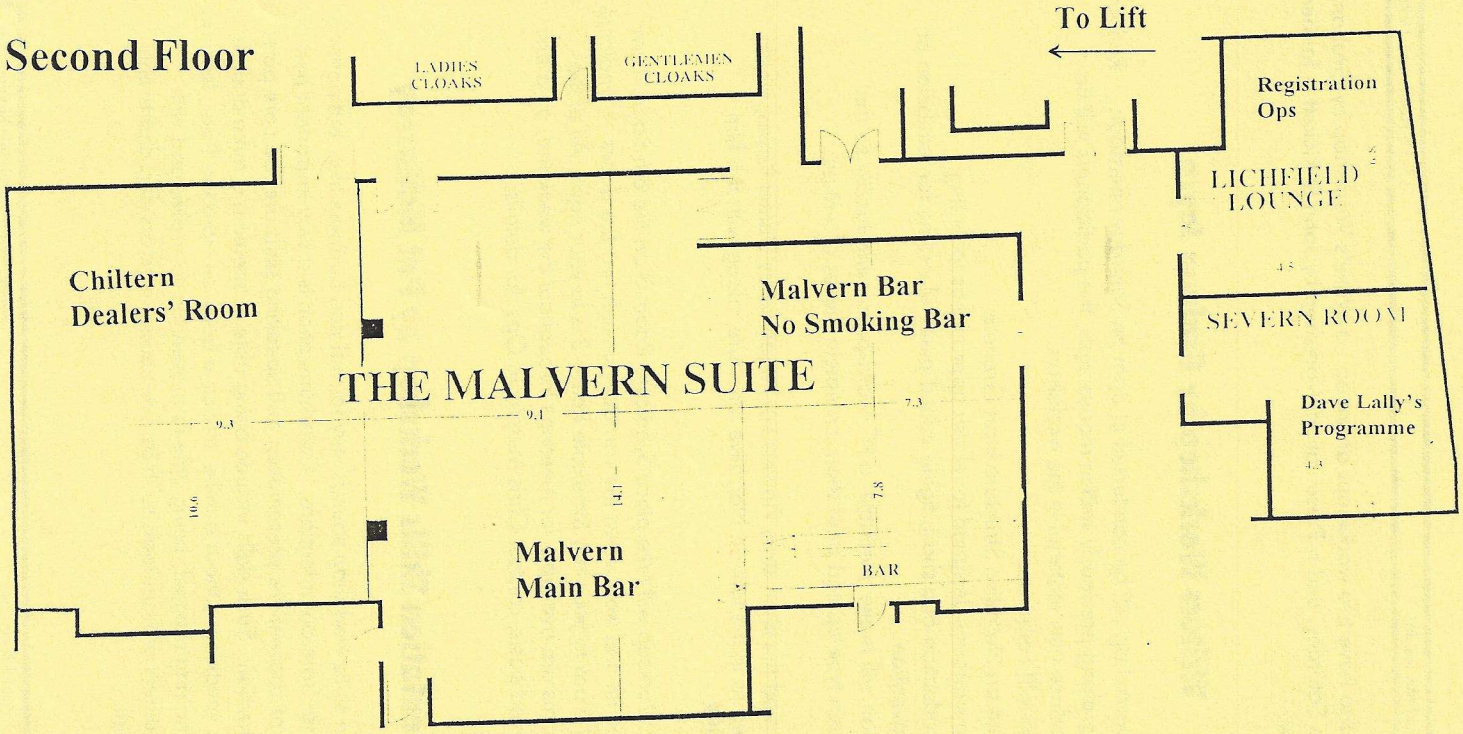
Please try to read the short story Flowers For Algernon by Daniel Keyes, which will be referred to in the talk on Narrative Structure, along with the film BLADERUNNER.

[The Writer's Worksop will take place Syndicate Room 3 on the 8th floor. Turn right out of the lift and walk down the corridor through two fire doors -- Syndicate Rooms 1 and 2 are to your left, Syndicate Room 3 is to your right. All of the Syndicate Rooms are available for meetings throughout the weekend, on a first come first served basis, contact Chris Murphy in Ops for details.]

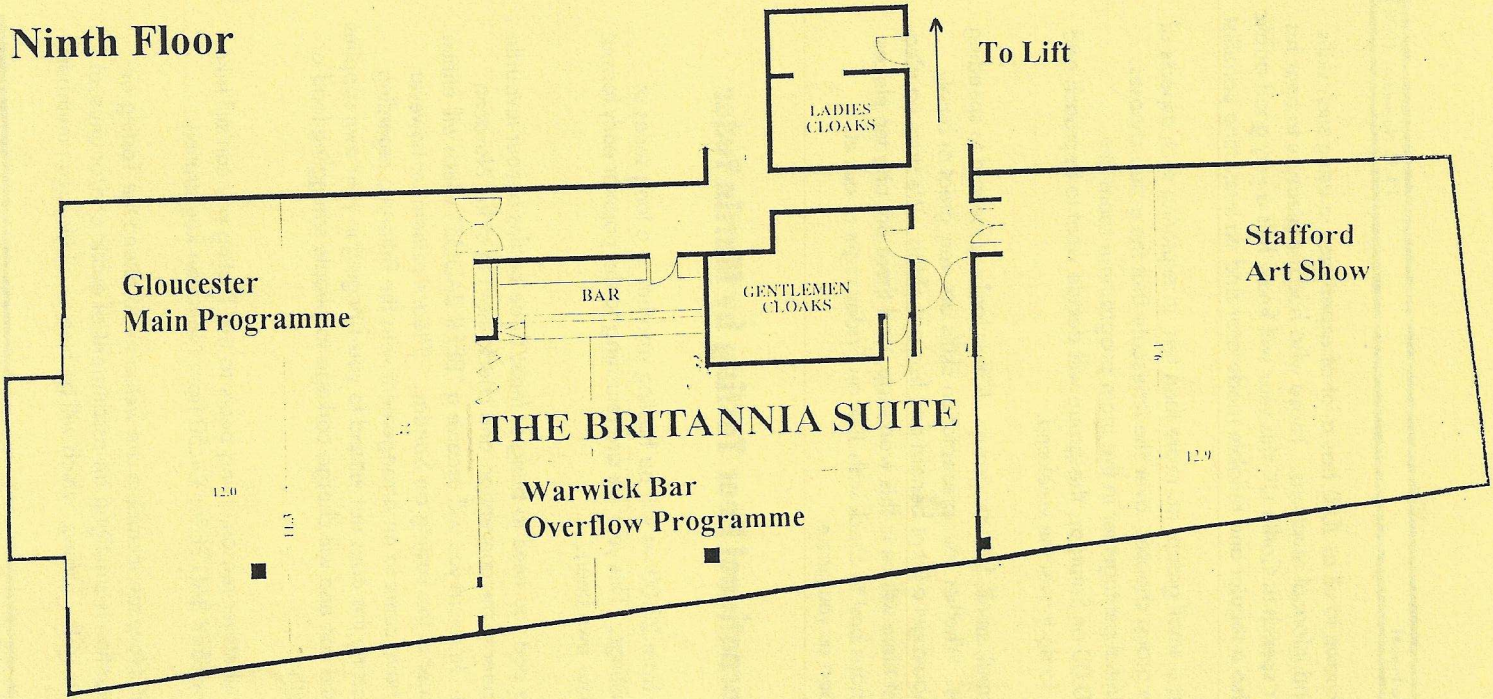
Presentation Skills Workshop by Pat McMurray

A presentation skills workshop sounds very formal and business like, but nothing could be further from our intentions. Communication is a very important part of fandom, and at conventions presentation and speaking skills are the core parts of public interaction. Such skills include being able to speak in a mike and be heard clearly, speaking without a mike, asking a question from the floor, leading a debate or chairing a panel, being able to present on your own and with support from others or from tools such as overhead projectors, flip charts and other visual aids.

Second Floor



Ninth Floor



The meeting/workshop rooms are on the 8th floor (Syndicate Rooms 1, 2 and 3). Turn right out of the lift and walk down the corridor through two fire doors -- Syndicate Rooms 1 and 2 are to your left, Syndicate Room 3 is to your right.

John D Rickett (known to all as JDR) has a lot of experience in using such skills in both formal and informal situations. Those who had the pleasure to hear his Guest of Honour speech at Corflu UK this year will know he's a very good public speaker. He's also a regular and reliable moderator and an interesting panellist.

He hopes to lead a small group, no more than ten, in exploring such aspects of these skills as the group chooses, over the timescale that the group chooses. Starting with an initial get together in the main programme room (the Gloucester) at 10.00 on Saturday, the group will decide what to approach and when and where to do it over the weekend.

It will be an informal, small, friendly group. JDR is looking forward to spending some time on this. Whether your presentation skills are very great or barely beginning you should get a lot of benefit and fun out of this. We have no idea how much interest there will be in this workshop, and there are only ten places available, so perhaps best to check with JDR on Friday night or ask at Registration as soon as you arrive.

The International Beer Tasting by Martin Tudor

On Sunday night from 20.00 we will be hosting another in a long series of Novacon Beer Tastings. This year we are returning to the popular early format of BYOB (bring your own beer).

If you wish to take part you need to bring *at least* three bottles of your favourite British or foreign beer to the convention and check them in at the Novacon Registration desk! In return you will receive a "BEER BADGE" which will entitle you to drink the beer at the Tasting on Sunday. (Please remember however, that although we have come to an arrangement with the Britannia regarding corkage for the Tasting this does not extend to you bringing in your own supplies of drink. The Hotel can and will charge corkage to people smuggling food or drink into the hotel!)

If you cannot, for whatever reason, bring beers to the Tasting you can still take part by buying your BEER BADGE for £4.50 from Novacon Registration.

Please note that *all* Novacon members are welcome to attend the Tasting on Sunday. The convention is supplying an assortment of exotic and/or unusual non-alcoholic drinks at the Tasting, which will be free to all Novacon members,

but please note that only those with BEER BADGES will be entitled to drink the beer.

To get the ball rolling the convention hopes to lay on two local beers on draught, Enville White (OG 1042, ABV 4%) and Sarah Hughes Dark Ruby Mild (OG 1058, ABV 6%), as well as a few interesting bottles - the rest is up to you! (For further information contact the Beer Tasting Organiser, Tony Berry, in the bar.)

Food and Drink

Breakfast

Breakfast will be served in the restaurant on the 1st floor from7.30am-11.00am.

Convention Menu

This will be served in the first floor restaurant for every session (except Sunday 18.00-20.00 which will be served in the Warwick).

Friday: 17.00-19.00 and 21.00-22.30
Selection of Sandwiches £1.50
Chef's Soup of the day and bread roll £1.50
Salad Bowl with Cheese or Meat and Bread Roll £2.50
Chicken Curry with Rice and Chips £3.50
Lasagne, Chips and Peas £3.50
Baked Potatoes with Salad Garnish and choice of filling £2.75
Bean Casserole Chips and Peas £3.50
Four Cheese Pizza and Chips £3.50
Bread Roll and Butter £0.50
Hot Fudge Cake with Cream £1.95
Apple Pie and Cream £1.95

Saturday: 12.30-14.30; 18.00-20.00 and 22.00-23.30
Selection of Sandwiches £1.50
Chef's Soup of the day and bread roll £1.50
Salad Bowl with Cheese or Meat and Bread Roll £2.50
Steak & Kidney Pie, Chips and Peas £3.50
Chicken, Chips and Peas £3.50
Vegetable Curry with Rice and Chips £3.50
Vegetable Lasagne, Chips and Peas £3.50
Bread Roll and Butter £0.50

Spotted Dick & Custard £1.95
Fresh Fruit Salad with Cream £1.95

Sunday: 12.30-14.30 and 18.00-20.00 (the latter in the Warwick)
Selection of Sandwiches £1.50
Chef's Soup of the day and bread roll £1.50
Salad Bowl with Cheese or Meat and Bread Roll £2.50
Pork & Herb Sausages, Mashed Potato, Onion Gravy & Peas £3.50
Chilli Con Carne, Rice and Chips £3.50
Vegetarian Nachos, Melted Cheese, Guacamole, Salsa, Sour Cream & Chives £3.50
Vegetable Lasagne, Chips and Peas £3.50
Battered Cod, Chips and Peas £3.50
Bread Roll and Butter £0.50
Gateaux with Cream £1.95
Profiteroles with Hot Chocolate Sauce £1.95

Table d'hôte

In addition to the "Convention Menu" the hotel has an excellent table d'hôte menu of which Birmingham-resident gourmet Rog Peyton said "I don't think I will be going out of the hotel to eat if that is an example of the menu", and it is reasonably priced at £14.50 for three courses.

The table d'hôte menu will be available 19.00-21.30 on Friday and Saturday. You should find booking forms detailing the menu in you convention pack on arrival. If not ask at either the Hotel Reception or at the Novacon Registration Table.

Drink

We will not be using Harvey's as a bar apart from the Brian Aldiss Signing Session and Andromeda Party on Friday night. The main convention bar is the Malvern and Malvern Bar on the 2nd floor (please note that the smaller section, the Malvern "Bar" is a no smoking area). In addition we will be using the Warwick bar on the 9th floor to serve drinks to those taking part in or watching the programme. Opening times are as follows:

Malvern/Malvern Bar: Friday and Saturday 11am to 2am and Sunday 11am to 9pm.

Warwick Bar: Friday 6pm-2am, Saturday and Sunday 11am to 2am.

The Real Ale we have arranged for the Britannia to supply for the weekend has been changed to Everards' Tiger Best Bitter (OG 1041, ABV 4.2%) and that will

sell at £1.85 per pint. John Smith's Smooth Pour and Foster's lager will be sold at £1.50 per pint. Beamish Black is also available at £2.10 per pint. Unfortunately the hotel cannot do draught cider, but will sell bottled cider, both sweet and dry, at £1.00 per bottle. As an added bonus the bars will be selling chocolate, Cadbury's as it is local but this will include Bournville for real chocolate lovers.

General Information

Novacon Table

The Novacon Registration table will be open:

Friday: 4pm-9pm for N28 Registrations ONLY.

Saturday: 10am-2pm and 3pm-7pm for all Novacon/BSFG business

Sunday: 10am-2pm for all Novacon/BSFG business

From Saturday morning onwards the table will be: selling a variety of Novacon merchandise and publications from previous Novacons; selling badges for the Beer Tasting (£4.50 per person or your 3 bottles of beer); selling memberships to Novacon 29 (just £23.00 at Novacon 28, rising to £28.00 after the con); raffle tickets in aid of the RNIB's Books for the Blind Project; taking money for the Birmingham SF Group's Beer & Skittles evening.

Dealers' Room

This is in the Chiltern on the 2nd floor and will be open from 10am until 6pm Saturday and 10am until 4pm on Sunday. It *may* be open at sometime on Friday. Times are subject to change.

The Art Show

This is in the Stafford on the 9th floor and will be open from 10am until 6pm on Saturday and on Sunday from10am until the Art Auction starts at noon.

Gophers

If you *have* volunteered to be a gopher or if you *wish* to volunteer please report to CHRIS MURPHY in the Ops Room (the Lichfield, behind the Novacon Registration Desk). If you *have* volunteered or *wish* to volunteer to help in the Book Room please report to NIGEL FURLONG in the Chiltern.

Raffle

If you wish to purchase tickets for the annual raffle in aid of RNIB's Books for the Blind Project, they will be on sale around the con and from the Novacon Registration table - Saturday onwards. In a change from established tradition,

prizes will *not* be given out as the draw is made at the Award Ceremony. Instead prizes will be available for collection from a table set up in the Warwick bar *after* the ceremony.

Badges

As non-convention hotel guests will be using the restaurant - for the table d'hôte menu you MUST wear your convention badges at all times in the public and convention areas of the Britannia. If you do not you may be refused service in the bars and refused food from the Convention Menu. You WILL be challenged by our own security staff and prevented from entering the function spaces. The hotel will challenge anyone in the hotel who is not wearing a badge.

As usual the badges are colour coded. Full members are white, Friday members pale yellow, Saturday members pink, Sunday members white, Tech Ops and Gophers green, committee orange Guest of Honour mid blue, BSFG Friday members pale blue, beer badges bright yellow.

Operations

As we are sure most of you are aware Novacon, like most conventions in Britain, is run by volunteers and we can't have too many of them! So if you are willing to help out at the convention - anything from moving chairs to helping with tech ops or working on the programme, please contact our Ops Manager, Chris Murphy, in the Ops Room or volunteer at the Novacon Registration Table (both Ops and Registration are in the Lichfield on the 2nd floor) .

A Baby Sitting & Child Minding Service

Is being provided, on a privately arranged basis, by Richard Standage, a registered nurse working at the highly prestigious Birmingham Children's Hospital, and Helena Bowles, registered nurse at the totally non-prestigious Birmingham Heartlands hospital, who are attending Novacon with their four-year-old son and one-year-old daughter. They can be contacted via the Novacon Registration Desk.

No Smoking

We would appreciate it if you refrained from smoking in designated "No Smoking" areas such as: the Chiltern/Dealers' Room (apart from dealers), the Stafford/Art Show, the Malvern Bar, and the Gloucester/
Main Programme.

Dire Warnings

Please remember that the Britannia Hotel is in the business of selling accommodation, drink and food for profit. Neither the management of the Britannia nor the Novacon committee will approve of people "crashing" in rooms they haven't paid for, and/or smuggling food/drink into the hotel. The Novacon committee will obviously support the hotel in any dispute with members of Novacon caught "crashing" and/or "smuggling".

Wheelchair Access by Pat McMurray

As you will have noticed the main entrance to the Britannia comprises a revolving door, leading to a small landing at the top of three stairs down to the ground floor reception. There is also a fire exit which can be opened from the inside, which leads to the same small landing. It appears possible to get an ordinary manual or powered wheelchair through the fire exit onto the landing. The hotel have a ramp for the three steps which they will lay down for the weekend. The fire exits are alarmed, but we'll ask them to switch the alarm off for the weekend. In the nature of things they will almost certainly forget to do these things, and switch the alarms on and take the ramp up at every shift changeover, but we shall do our best.

If you have a scooter or large trolley which cannot get through the fire exit, the revolving door can be completely folded back to allow very good access. I have been shown how to do this, and intend to train every gopher and anyone else who's interested in it, how to do it. The hotel have shown every sign of being helpful and friendly, but best to be prepared. I would expect that the ramp will be down and the doors open most of Friday afternoon as the dealers come in and out as well.

The hotel has 11 floors - ground floor reception, Mezzanine bar area, which we probably won't use, 1st floor restaurant which we will use, 2nd floor main con bar, dealer's room, Ops and registration, 8th floor workshops, 9th floor artshow, smaller bar and programme room. All other floors are bedrooms and there are bedrooms on the 2nd and 8th floors as well.

There are three lifts to each floor - two public lifts and one staff lift. There are also fire escape stairs between all floors and public stairs between the ground, mezzanine and first floors. Both public lifts and all public rooms appear both wheelchair and scooter accessible. We've calculated that it will take ten minutes for the entire membership to travel by lift from the second to the ninth floor - we have fifteen minute intervals between most programme items. The staff lift can

be used by the membership, but appears very difficult for wheelchair access - I'd stick to the public lifts.

All the public areas on each floor are flat, with no stairs. Many of the doors are on springs and may prove difficult to open without assistance. Most entrances to public rooms are double doored and will be left open where possible. The artshow and dealers room appear large enough that they should not be crowded and manoeuvring should be reasonable.

The hotel has certain bedrooms they provide to people with access difficulties. None of them are fully accessible. All the bedroom doors are standard width, but they can remove the bathroom doors, if requested. I would suggest contacting the hotel in advance to make doubly sure they are aware of any potential difficulties. I believe wheelchairs will be able to get into the rooms, but I don't think scooters will be able to. It should be possible to get the hotel to take care of a scooter and recharge it overnight.

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me, Pat McMurray, via the Novacon Registration Desk or catch me in the programme room.

[Please note that if you wish to complain about the change of access to the Britannia through the closure of New Street correspondence should be addressed to: The City Centre Manager, City Centre Management, 6th Floor, Essex House, 27 Temple Street, Birmingham, B2 5DB. (Telephone 0121- 303-3004, Fax 0121-303-3332).

Erratum

Due to technical difficulties and a sudden change of circumstances our Special Booklet, "Alien TV", had to go to the printer without the final corrections that Paul McAuley, our Guest of Honour, had requested. Please amend your copies as follows: Page 5 line 3 change "ExoCon 15" to "Exocon 8"; page 5 line 14 change "twenty years" to "eleven years"; Page 7 line 32 change "Twenty years" to "Eleven years"; Page 9 line 38 close inverted commas after 'you up.'"; Page 10 line 29 change "them up to" to "them facing the"; Page 14 line 32 change "was okay." to "is okay."; Page 17 line 16 change "arrived and" to "arrived, they"; Page 19 line 14 change "or horse." to "or a horse."; Page 19 line 18/19 change "hang glider" to "hang-glider"; Page 19 line 39 change "individuals one" to "individuals of one"; Page 20 line 13/14 change "loft up from" to "loft from"; Page 21 line 6 change "Elicade had theorized" to "Elicade theorized"; Page 22 line 2 change "with the lattice of bones defined" to "by a lattice of bones sharply defined". Many, many apologies to Paul!

[This publication was produced by Martin Tudor for Novacon 28, November 1998, on behalf of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group (all rights revert to contributors on publication) and was printed by Critical Wave Publications, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, Willenhall, W.13 1HX.]